

Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council Meeting
Iowa Department of Economic Development, ICN Board Room
November 24, 2009, 2:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Preston Daniels, Chair; Director, Department of Human Rights (DHR)
Adam Lounsbury, Iowa Commission on Volunteer Services (ICVS)
Kathy Stone, Department of Public Health (DPH)
Richard Moore, Director, Child Advocacy Board
Becky Swift, ODCP (for Gary Kendall)
Diane Oak Goode, Workforce Development (for Elisabeth Buck)
Mary Nelson, DHS (for Charlie Krogmeier)
Cyndy Erickson, DE (for Judy Jeffrey)

Members Absent or Unrepresented:

Chuck Morris, ISU Extension, 4-H Youth Development
Shanell Wagler, Director Office of Empowerment

Steering Committee Members/State Agency Workgroup Members Present:

Steve Michael, DHR, CJJP
Carol Behrer, Youth Policy Institute of Iowa
Annalise Plooster, DHR, SIYAC Coordinator
Jeff Grimes, AMOS
Diane Oak Goode, IWD
Amy Daniels, DHR, Youth Development Project Coordinator
Mary Sheka, IGOV
Jason Allen, IWD
Eric Sage, CJJP
Dave Kuker, CJJP

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Paul Stageberg, Administrator, DHR/CJJP

SIYAC Member: Sean Ryan,

Minutes were taken by Dottie Schiltz, Recording Secretary.

Objectives and Introductions

1. Daniels welcomed attendees and outlined the agenda. He called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. A quorum was present. Objectives were: 1) Engage SIYAC Members in ICYD Council Discussions, 2) Review National Governors Association (NGA) Grant Opportunity, and 3) Finalize objectives and formalize strategies for ICYD's Annual Report.

Approval of Minutes

2. Daniels asked if everyone had reviewed minutes of Oct 27, 2009. One issue fixed on hard copy that Becky Swift was here representing Gary Kendall. Becky Swift moved to approve minutes, seconded by Diane Oak Goode. Upon Vote motion passed.

State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC)

3. Daniels asked for SIYAC Report. Sean introduced himself as Vice President of SIYAC, visiting from Northeast Iowa. He reported that he had gotten together with school officials in surrounding areas and presented a power point about different things affecting them and what actions was going to be taken in each district. In their areas the focus has been on the bullying policies. Introduced SIYAC to the school staff, explaining what role can play for the schools. SIYAC has some great things they are working on and have formed four teams to work on Team Nutrition, Youth Outreach, Substance Abuse, and Life After Graduation. Plooster then provided update from last meeting, reporting that upon the ICYD's recommendations, SIYAC identified legislative champions. Preston has sent out letters to them to see if they will partner with us on that. The next SIYAC meeting is Wednesday, December 2, 2009. Plooster referred to the yellow sheet in the ICYD packet that listed many projects SIYAC are working on. The ICYD ideas from last meeting have been weaved into the projects. Plooster appreciates ICYD's input and welcomes any ideas, information on community projects, or would like to work with SIYAC on anything, please contact her. Annalise confirmed to Daniels that follow up phone calls are planned to the legislators? Stone asked who the letters went to. Plooster reported Representative Dave Heaton and Senator Amanda

Ragan were contacted, since these two have supported many youth issues in the past. Daniels asked Ryan how the bullying law is working in his part of the state. He commented that in the Elementary schools it is working pretty good, but interest drops in middle school and high school. Students do not worry, staff do not respond, people look the other way. Sean believes that it needs to be reinforced in the schools. Council expressed appreciation for taking time to come down from Waukon CS. Becky Swift noted on February 22, the Alliance of Coalitions for Change (AC4C) was sponsoring a Youth Day on the Hill, and more specific to the Substance Abuse issues, maybe the SIYAC committee on that would be interested in participating. Annelise agreed that the information offered would be great information and they would put that in their planning and organize their meetings around that also. Kathy Stone commented on a conference that JEL is having in early Feb. Plooster reported that SIYAC was taking on a volunteer role in helping with students going to the conference that IJAG, JEL and SIYAC are all partnering to provide. Content of conference will provide leadership tracks, arts, and other creative ideas. SIYAC is playing a volunteer role in that conference. Going back to the bullying issue, there is an effort at the federal level to look at setting federal standards, and also looking at state level working on way to recognize schools that are going above and beyond what the law says on bullying and harassment. As DE develops this certification process in way to recognize schools she noted that SIYAC would be helpful on things that we are developing to ensure that DE was right on, to give input. SIYAC will be kept informed on that as well as other activities DE may have going on.

State Strategies to Achieve Graduation

4. Daniels reiterated whatever the Council focuses on, will be beneficial to all and that each agency will need to play a vital role to make a difference for the youth in Iowa. Cyndy Erickson led the discussion on state strategies to achieve graduation. As she related this as a team effort, she began by reviewing what the Council had determined to work at the last meeting – raising student graduation rates as a top priority. The prior discussion also established that the focus of discussions/decisions be at the policy level, on increasing its capacity level, and engaging community members and youth. She reiterated that all entities represented within the Council have a role to play especially if we plan to affect graduation rates and breach achievement gaps, it takes everyone to work together to reach that goal. A small workgroup of staff met to further develop the priority area(s) for the ICYD Council. The participants of that group are: Cyndy Erickson, Steve Michael, Carol Behrer, Steve Havemann, Ruth Allison, Jane Today, Amy Daniels, Annelise Plooster, and Jeff Grimes. While developing the priority as discussed, Erickson reported that the National Governor's Association (NGA) Grant Opportunity presented itself. The Governor's office asked the group to apply for this planning grant worth \$50,000 to look at data in detail and establish a statewide plan to develop policy strategies to implement in the dropout factory communities. The NGA based this grant on the work of Robert Belfonz, who coined the term "Dropout Factory". In 2002, four high schools in Iowa were identified as Dropout Factories; by 2006, Iowa had 8. A school is identified as a Factory by having promoting power of 60% or less. Promotion power is determined by comparing the number of freshmen were enrolled in high school to number of seniors were enrolled in same school four years later. This increase in the number of schools in Iowa is concerning. However, Iowa is not viewed as high need, because Iowa rank near the top for both graduation rates and dropout rates. In development of the application, selling points stressed that while Iowa students are doing well, not all are doing that well, and that significant gaps exist for those in minority areas, free/reduced lunch levels, etc. Additionally, we thought it would be interesting to them that we are a state that is doing well, and wanting to move from good to great. A copy of the grant was provided to review. The grant was written to be the guide for the ICYD Council Action Plan, even if the grant is not funded, it can guide activities and some things can be completed without the grant funds.

a. Review National Governor's Association Grant Opportunity

The Grant requirements are specific to who should serve on the core team. Heavier emphasis was placed on people from the educational realm but also wanted representation from some other sectors. The core team would travel for technical assistance that will work intensively with data and analysis. Core team members are: Kevin Fangman, DE, Team Leader; Molly Kotmeier, Senior Policy Analyst from Governors' Office, Preston Daniels (DHR), Dick Moore (Child Advocacy Board), Gary Norris, Superintendent of Waterloo CSD, (one of the Dropout Factories), and Gary Schmitz, President of Hawkeye Community College, which serves the Waterloo area. The data included in the proposal shows the graduation rates and drop out rates as well as overall rates for subpopulations to demonstrate the gaps by race and ethnicity.

DE has a goal to increase the graduation rate. We have asked schools to come up with plans to address the increasing graduation gaps and find ways to reduce achievement gaps. This grant would create a statewide plan.

In Iowa we also have funding for dropout prevention and recovery, called modified allowable growth, which is locally funded from property taxes. DE approves those budgets with the formula that the district identifies how

many students are at risk. Four indicators are used in Iowa to determine who those students are: attendance, failing grades, not connected to school, and two years below peers in reading and math. The technical assistance team will help to identify whether those are the right indicators and if they are specific enough or not. If not, then they can put more authenticity by providing more common criteria. The DE is conducting focus groups and gathering data in regards to current policy (landscape), which is considering raising the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18, by determining the supports needed to be put in place if it was raised. The existing ICYD infrastructure goes beyond DE around policies and will provide support in achieving the goals and objectives of the grant.

Mr. Daniels' questioned if there is a projection of how many more students raising the compulsory age would keep in school. A discussion ensued on the affects, enforcement, and possibility of development of yet another law. Erickson offered to acquire one and provide at next meeting. She then summarized the two things the study group is doing: The core group has convened a large stakeholder group, from different areas across the state. They meet to frame issues and conduct focus groups through the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). They have also been interviewing students, parents and staff. Participants in focus groups must be 18 or have parental permission. The overall objective is to collectively develop a comprehensive, systemic and shared plan of measurable outcome(s) based on state and locally identified needs.

The purpose of this proposal is to obtain technical assistance to identify root causes and local needs in order to identify and implement strategies to address the issues. The project outcome will be accomplished with the completion of three goals and corresponding objectives:

- 1) Establish primary focus of policy and technical assistance on graduation and dropout through establishment of a core team, efforts an in-state team focus;
- 2) Establishing an aggressive, measurable and accountable goal by identifying root causes of the problem, identifying local needs that contribute to differences in promotion power of districts, and develop an early warning data system; and
- 3) Establishing a statewide comprehensive, systemic, and shared plan of action by identifying appropriate actions based on identification of local needs and root causes by the early warning system, developing a plan of action, a communication plan, and project reports.

Actions to be taken will involve:

- Development of outreach and communications for strategy dropout prevention and recovering out-of-school youth,
- Creation of early warning data systems to identify students most at-risk of not finishing high school,
- Partnering with local educations and social service agencies to offer effective in- and out-of-school interventions,
- Establishing school reentry programs for juvenile offenders, and
- Turning low-performing schools around.

The dropout factory schools are urban school districts in Des Moines, Waterloo, and Council Bluffs. The proposed work plan was provided on page 5 of the grant proposal. In summary, after the core team is established, aggressive measureable accountable goals are determined across the system, dropout factories are identified to compare characteristics with schools who are doing well, providing a quality versus quantitative design and protocols, review the early warning indicators, and develop/review analysis of the indicators to assist in prioritizing strategies to implement in these communities. The ICYD Council will monitor the grant activities and SIYAC is identified as a support advisory team.

The grant budget shows that funds are designated for an evaluation consultant, doing qualitative work, and completing site visits, which will consist of six people. Site visit team would be some of the Core team members and will include individuals from different groups. A marketing firm will be contracted to develop a communication plan to print publications, the plan, electronic versions, develop social networking strategies. Other funding costs include in-state meeting costs, travel expenses, and other indirect costs, totaling the \$50,000.

After Cyndy's overview, discussion, questions, and suggestions followed to determine if the Council wanted to adopt this proposal, regardless of funding, determine if it is a template that we could follow, and if we don't get funding, decide what direction we want to go. In discussion, she suggested first identifying an aggressive goal all agreed to get behind. Discussion regarding strategies and communications evolved. Clarification on the "dropout factory" definition and how it relates to the dropout rates was explained that a different formula is used. Strategies and communication will emerge as we work with planning piece afterwards. The strategies will be identified at the conclusion of the grant. If there are things needed to be done with particular districts there will be funds for that as well.

Daniels brought back in question what was asked of the Council to decide. Lounsbury stated his approval that the grant is a great idea, an effort and way to start; a good way to start a framework. It meets the needs for the funding opportunity, but does not have to meet the ICYD requirement if we want to do something else. If we want it to work, it should have those different points and resources involved. Consensus not to pass it up and agree with everything in the proposed draft endeavor whether the grant is approved or not, that the Council support the actions and steps proposed.

Motion made by Moore to use the plan submitted as the NGA proposal, and support the actions and steps proposed whether it is approved for funding or not. Motion seconded by Stone. Upon vote, motion passed. In follow-up questions, Erickson noted that six state project proposals will be funded.

b. Finalize Objectives and Formalize Strategies

Formalizing strategies and objectives would lend to discussion over what reasonable and achievable goal ICYD wants to make from the data that we have, whether it be for graduation rates; i.e., is it about reducing particular achievement gaps or graduation gaps. We need a statewide goal. Reviewing the data provided consideration of tying to the federal requirements that have come out, yet reaching for higher than those requirements. Discussion pursued over achievement gap definition and how it is measured. Suggestions were made to focus on improving graduation rate overall and to set the rate at a 5% increase overall as an achievable goal. Continued discussion covered persons with disabilities (IEP students), special education indicators, minorities' data, and comparisons to federal requirements. It was noted that we need to start with improving graduation overall. Although we want to be at 100%, need to be achievable and accountable within a specific timeline. Considerations of bringing back more data that would enable them to conclude specific numbers of students to represent the percentage suggested. The more focused, the more specific, the more accountable and achievable a goal can be. If Iowa is to increase its graduation rate it will be necessary to focus on minorities therefore bringing added attention to schools with higher minority populations.

Discussion to broaden the focus from graduation rate to assisting students who have dropped out achieve a GED. Daniels reminded the group to look at perspective. Minority youth gets GED but still slides further behind to those with high school diplomas. We need to push for high school diplomas when it is achievable.

Suggested strategies: 1. High school graduation; 2. Include a strategy to support youth in pursuit of a GED.

All students need to get a high school diploma, should we include targeting youth achieving a GED. We want to reach out and get them all. Consideration of setting up as: 1) 4-year diploma; 2) a GED; 3) graduate in 5 years or more. The goal is a common unifying thing that this Council wants to make visible and be able to demonstrate success (improvement in measures). A discussion ensued on what to measure that will send a powerful message and what is measurable.

The Council wants to review more data that includes graduation rates for minorities, disabilities, poverty, and identify the communities with low graduation rates. Is there data that differentiates people seeking employment with high school diplomas and GEDs? What does it look like for a young person coming into society with diploma or without? It will be helpful to have a person talk about the rates and percentages for the data. How many youth does it takes to change percentages?

The same group of staff will meet and gather relevant data for the next meeting, so the Council can decide on specific goals and objectives.

Other Business

None

Next meeting

Next meeting is scheduled for Dec 17, 2009, 2:00 – 4:00p.m. at the Jessie Parker Building, Starkweather Room.

Motion to adjourn by

Noted as a very substantive meeting with appreciation, Daniels adjourned meeting at 3:58 p.m.

Submitted by
Dottie Schiltz, Recording Secretary